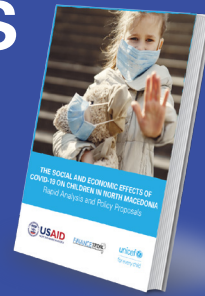


RECOMMENDATIONS

The Social and Economic Effects of COVID-19 on Children in North Macedonia Rapid Analysis and Policy Proposals



1. Adopt a Protocol for Social Service Provision during restrictions on physical contact/ movement.

2. Institute a Coordination Body for Immediate Social Work Response during crisis, with representatives of MLSP, CSW, Municipalities, NGOs and private care providers.

3. In finalizing the new Labor Code, (re)consider the options for teleworking and flexible working arrangements to also suit situation like the one inflicted by the pandemic.

4. Consider designing a prospective measure which will either bear (part of) the cost of paid parental care leave due to Covid-19; or extend a subsidy scheme for companies who will replace the worker during his/her paid leave; or physically adapt pre-school and school facilities (1st-4th grade) to reopen in September even if overall health risks are not deemed sufficiently curbed at that time.

5. Maintain free school meal entitlement for poor children during periods of prolonged school closures.

6. Introduce a second child allowance threshold for households with three and more children and align any condition related to the possession of fixed and movable property, and for duration of the measure, with the March 2020 amendments/changes in the Social Protection Law.

We propose the following second threshold (intervention in Article 31 of the Child Protection Law):

- MKD1,000 for one child of school age; MKD1,600 for two children; MKD2,000 for three or more children;

- MKD1,200 for one child of pre-school age; MKD1,900 for two children; MKD2,400 for three or more children;

- MKD1,600 for two children of pre-school age; MKD2,000 for three or more children of pre-school age.

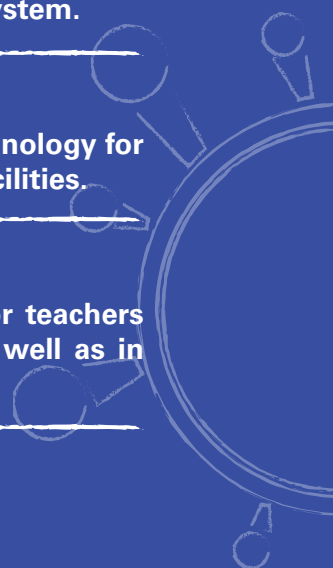
As Covid-19's effect has been more severe for girls, a special provision may be introduced for girls.

7. Adapt the legal framework and adopt a strategy for distance learning and online teaching.

8. Make provisions for the use of technology from home. Make a plan for the usage of laptops or tablets that children or teaching staff can borrow from schools or another public institution and can use at home to effectively take part in digital/distance classes. Strengthen the system capacities for data/user management, particularly within the Education Management Information System (EMIS) system.

9. Create safe spaces equipped with the necessary technology for digital/distance learning within schools and pre-school facilities.

10. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers for integrating digital learning within regular classes as well as in exceptional circumstances.



11. Provide continuous support to teachers during the implementation of digital learning.

12. Prepare a plan for remedial learning when pupils go back to physical classrooms.

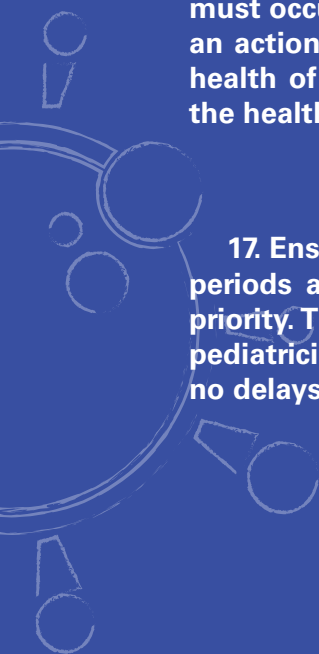
13. Rethink the curricula and teaching plans to give teachers more flexibility in the implementation.

14. Establish a database of socially vulnerable children at school level.

15. Prepare a plan for educational assistance to those in need when the schools reopen, such as children at risk of dropping out, or children in need who are moving to the next stage of education. Include local child protection services and social protection services in the preparation of these plans.

16. Handling of the health and economic crisis due to Covid-19 must occur simultaneously. The Government should promptly adopt an action plan and start implementing measures for improving the health of the population, which has worsened due to lockdown of the health system.

17. Ensuring access to routine care during antenatal and postnatal periods and to child preventive and curative services should be a priority. The Ministry of Health should coordinate gynecologists and pediatricians at all levels of the health system to make sure there are no delays related to these services.



18. There is a need to prevent delays in accessing hospital care and to increase provision of high-quality coordinated care by healthcare providers. The Ministry of Health should urgently enable the resumption of all health services in all health centers, introducing Covid-19 checkups prior to hospitalizations.

19. Awareness must be raised among parents that risks of delayed access to hospital care for emergency conditions can be much higher than the risks posed by Covid-19. Public campaign can be effective in educating and raising the awareness of parents.

20. Mitigating actions need to be taken to support mental health of children as part of a family support package. The Ministry of Health should emphasize policies and actions in the area of mental health in the post-Covid-19 recovery.

21. Once the pandemic subsides, the country should reinvigorate demand for routine healthcare and vaccination, as well as intensify preventive check-ups among children, to contain as much as possible the risks posed by postponing regular healthcare during the Covid-19 period.



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